

PS 3543

.A3 J6

1915

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00002708188





Iris Valfranc

The Journal of Iris Valjean



By
IRIS VALJEAN



1903

HUDSON-KIMBERLY PUBLISHING COMPANY
Kansas City, Missouri

PS 3543
A3 J6
1915

Dec. 15 1913
a
74753

Copyright 1903
By Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Company
Kansas City, Missouri

*

YEARLY ART
RECORDS '00

PREFACE.

So long as this world is composed of lies
spoken and unspoken, hypocrisy, subter-
fuges, and the hideous strain of masquerading,
my frankness cannot be altogether con-
demned.

IRIS VALJEAN.

THE JOURNAL OF IRIS VALJEAN.

By IRIS VALJEAN.

April 17, 1900.—I do not know how long the conviction has been growing upon me, but it seems years since I first began to notice the vast difference existing between me and my fellow-beings. I never cared for an intimate girl associate, because I could find no one whose likes and dislikes were in harmony with mine. I am the child of an American mother and a French father, inheriting the delicate features and constitution of my lovely mother and the unyielding will and erratic ideas of my Huguenot ancestors. By nature rebellious, I could never tolerate parental discipline when it came to things conventional, and my dear, patient mother used often to sigh and say: "She is like none of my people."

"Nor like *m-i-n-e*, save in minor respects," *mon père* would reply. "She is like no one I have ever known. She is a genius—a genius, *ma chère*. I am really glad she is so distinct from the world as to appear conspicuously foreign."

Ah! my poor, doting father. He did not live to know how mistaken he was in calling me a genius. If being a genius implies an abnormal brain capacity, then I am not a genius. If it signifies a startling oddness from all woman-kind, so evident that the possessor stands widely apart from the world and its hypocritical ways, then I am a genius. I, a mere girl, *petite*, pale, big-eyed, supple, yet languid, a genius? How ridiculous it sounds!

* * *

April 22d.—This morning I sat under a blossoming peach tree with a dog-eared volume of Pope in my lap, but I forgot to read in the more absorbing task of watching a big bumblebee that kissed and kissed passionately a shy pink crocus. Suddenly, and by no aforethought, I said aloud: "I am a genius." The wind took the words and ran away with them among the stones and through the waving blossoms of the peach. The hills whispered them to one another in hollow tones that died away, a strangely quivering wail in the depths of the green valley.

* * *

April 30th.—Last night a cricket piped a lullaby outside on my sill. The melody crept into my heart, bringing a soothing balm to my tired nerves. I possess the great joy of being able to go to bed at night with no vision of the day's meanness to torment my brain. How can one be haunted by stinging remembrances or vulgar gloating unless one struggles to soar ahead of one's neighbor by fair means or foul? How can one be *i-n* the world and *o-f* it, and not join in this devilish rivalry? I am not *o-f* the world—therefore I'll have none of it. Oh, the pain, the agonized pain that comes from contact with the saw-like edges of the world! It is as bits of glass imbedded in the heart, and the blood flows from the wound so slowly; drip, drip, drip—like rain from the eaves when a shower is over. It is maddening—maddening!

* * *

May 6th.—My bringing up and educational training has not been different from that of other girls of well-to-do parents, yet, in spite of the care and polishing that has been mine, I am inwardly the same odd character. No amount of cultivation can eradicate that which is born in the flesh. The same likes and dis-

likes, the same startling eccentricities that marked my childhood have grown with my growth and are now forever established. Traits that I would not conceal if I could, because there is not one drop of Janus blood in my body. My instinct is my guide in the judging of men and women, and it is seldom I mistake to what extent a person can be trusted the moment I look into his or her eyes. It is a strange, instantaneous telegraphy. This explains my unshakable aversion to society—for is not society composed of a class too selfish and narrow-minded to be worthy of cultivation? I am weary of having dinned in my ears that I ought to esteem everybody. I do esteem everybody till I know they are undeserving, but as for *l-i-k-i-n-g* them, I cannot do it. My whole outraged nature rises in rebellion. How can I really like a person until I have some reason for doing so? I *w-i-l-l* not say things simply to be polite. I treat people civilly and courteously—it is all they deserve. To be treated likewise is all I expect or deserve. Why cannot the world exist on this sort of chivalry, without clamoring for spasmodic intimacies? I do not know why women con-

tract intimacies, unless it is because they take a fiendish delight in anticipating and realizing the hysterical end of such companionship. It always comes in one guise or another, and then—they do not speak as they pass by. Both persons make haste to form a similar alliance with some other woman, and so it goes—"Off with the old, on with the new."

I have often heard: if one were not or did not appear to be a hail-fellow-well-met, one could not progress or get on comfortably with the world. In other words, it is policy to seem other than what one really is; policy, no doubt—but policy is not in my vocabulary. Policy be DAMNED—such a word belongs exclusively to hypocrites, liars, scandal-mongers, and politicians.

* * *

May 10th.—I have an irresistible mania for analyzing people and uncovering the good and bad in their natures. If I did not do this perhaps I would be happier, but I am growing more and more indifferent to the shock it produces, and now, when I find my idol stuffed with sawdust, I simply sigh. There are no moans or tears. My heart becomes a

little more like adamant, and after awhile, when it will no longer respond to impressions, it will be as a living tomb over the charred bones of defeat.

* * *

June 8th.—There is a class of people who stoop to conquer—no matter if a heart is crushed under foot, or a soul doomed to a living death. They gloat as Nero of Rome in scattering destruction in their wake. They are as a poisoned sword in the guise of men and women. There is something in intuition, a great deal in instinct, and yet no person can read another's thoughts beyond a certain point, and it is well. Sometimes one has thoughts from which the devil himself (although the prompter) would flee in terror.

* * *

June 17th.—I am drunk - drunk - drunk! with the strange delirium that always succeeds my rendition of Beethoven's "Kreutzer Sonata." Beethoven, like Shakespeare, is the master magician of every human passion. The first presto movement is like a great draught of rare old wine, and the last notes produce a soothing drowsiness that lifts the soul far and above commonplace things.

July 10th.—I am wearing a new house-gown—green, like Mahomet's angel of Paradise; a shade that is restful to eyes that have wept. To-morrow I may wear a gown red—red, like wine wrought of sunlight and blood. My gown is a silent crier of my mood, and the scarlet gown is worn to harmonize with a period of high spirits that always follows days of depression and *ennui*. I have company to-day, yet my guests are voiceless and invisible to all eyes save mine. Memory brings many unwelcome visitors that have been long absent. Yes, long-buried angry words and hasty deeds stalk hand in hand and knock dolefully at my soul. I dare not cry out: "Thou shalt not enter here!" Words are futile, as ghosts of remorse haunt their natal home with fiend-like persistency.

I see — see—*O Grand Dieu!* I see countless sable-robed phantoms waving long, slender arms and twisting their horrible skeleton fingers. Their great, hollow eyes of unfathomable depth pierce my innermost soul, and, as the figures, one by one, pass their awful hands across my warm face, I shrink in terror. How they grin in jeering mockery, and

O, how their eyes burn with devilish glee! A chill of regret sweeps over my heart, and though I cry: "I repent! I repent!" it is unheard, and my voice is suddenly stilled like a violin string that has snapped.

* * *

July 12th.—I am glad to-day. My personal belongings have been increased by a bust of Napoleon, a plaster plaque of Dante, a copy of Hervieux' "Théroigne de Merincourt" and Ibsen's "A Doll House." I imagine my study is tenfold more attractive since these things have found their niche in it. My enjoyment in inanimate things is never transitory. Of course, the excess of joy wears off in time, but it is supplanted by a new feeling that increases with association.

The afternoon grows old. Already the crickets have begun to tune their fiddles. I sit alone in the shadow of my room and listen to the sougning of the wind in the maples. It is the wholesome, exuberant wind of solitude and a wonderful elixir. *O ciel, je suis bien fatiguée!*

* * *

July 15th.—I have just returned from the orchard, where I have been day-dreaming

under the fruit-laden branches of a spreading apple-tree. The sun shone warm upon my pale face and uncovered head, and the bees and hornets sung a queer medley that somehow found a little niche in my heart.

* * *

July 23d.—To-day marks the twentieth year of my birth. A mocking-bird came to my window in the cool, gray dawn and sung me a glad roundelay. I look back over the ghost of years and say: "Twenty years! Such a long, long time, and O, so little done!" I have not yet found my niche in life, and each night as I go to bed I childishly wonder if it will come on the morrow. I do not want to be grown up, but the years pass, taking me at a rapid pace away from girlhood—away from the innocence and faith into that struggling, half-crazed fraternity called "The World," and because of my timidity, the very quality that should endear me to it, the world laughs and sneers because I stand aloof from its wickedness. Each day repulsive revelations come to me, drawing my heart-strings a little tighter and making shipwreck of my sympathy.

Ah, humanity—*h-u-manity!* It can be sifted down to the very dust of nothingness. Its variety makes the world what it is to-day, and its corruptness is the subtle something that makes it endurable. I no longer believe the half of what people tell me.

The little, wizened, decrepit apple-woman who stands all day in a damp stall in the market-place slips tainted fruit into my bag while she talks glibly to hide her deception. (That is shrewdness.) My sewing-maid appropriates a yard of silk from the material I have given her to make me a gown. (That is cleverness.) The street-car conductor gives me a slick coin—knowingly. (That is policy.) The butcher gives me two thirds of a pound of meat and charges me for a pound. (That is stealing.) A person will lie when the truth would be better. (That is devilishness.) Women grow red in the face insisting upon paying one another's car-fare. (That is deceitfulness.) Men delight to spit in public places; especially at a political meeting or a circus. (That is foolishness.) A woman will slander another under cover of smiles and cat-like purrs. (That is cussedness.)

* * *

August 31st.—Sometimes it rests me to extinguish my candle and sit in the gray light when moths are flying—flying. At such times I am conscious of wounds that quiver unconfessed, but the pain is not fierce enough to make me cry out. Only the wind gives voice to my thoughts. When it wails I know it is the petulant sobbing of the demon “Unrest”—a figure with clanking chains that walks at my side by day and lies down with me at night. Each day is a battle to keep its voice in submission. At long intervals my little body sways; my brain refuses to work coherently; it does not respond to the call of my will, and I drift—drift with the tide.

My temperament is as uncontrollable as the ocean; as mysterious as Eternity. O, I would I were wholly one nationality! I have no choice. I would be like either parent.

I love few people, few indeed: my mother and—Eugene.

* * *

September 7th.—This household revolves on wheels of painful regularity and precision. The sameness of the routine is exasperating. I am so weary of four red walls and four blue ones; I could cry, but I won't. I am more

than a trifle in the depths of the blue-demon. I am thinking of that ugly, self-important, and despicable word, 'propriety.' I would there were no such thing. It is a barrier erected by prudish females; a barrier the breadth and circumference of the globe, with the strength of the rock of Gibraltar. I call down my wrath upon the senseless thing. I will not, will not—*w-i-l-l* not recognize the word. I would as soon bow down to a hideous, malformed Chinese god. What need has an independent spirit of propriety? The two cannot dwell together. I would rather die than not have unbridled liberty and freedom. Propriety is for fools and fools alone. Let fools worship at its shrine.

* * *

October 9th.—O, miserable, miserable I! Last night only snatches of sleep came to my tired brain. I heard all manner of unfamiliar sounds, and I put out my hand in the partial darkness of my room in an effort to grasp some of the mysterious objects that hovered around my bed, but my hand touched nothing, as my vision was only a delusion. The clock ticked loudly. Unconsciously I began to count—tick, tick, tick, tick—1, 2, 3, 4—I think I counted a million, then I lost count

and grew so wide awake that I sat up in bed and listened—tick, tick, tick—O, how maddening was its regularity! I wished it would leave off. In desperation I began to count—1, 2, 3—“Time, time is fleeting,” said the clock; I heard it distinctly and repeatedly: “Time, time is fleeting.” I pulled the cover up over my head, and saw the world of humanity moving toward a great, yawning, Stygian chasm. The tall, gaunt form of Father Time strode majestically in the throng, mercilessly urging onward the faltering and terror-stricken ones. O God! men, women, and children—the blind, the halt, and the lame were swallowed up in the awful darkness nevermore to be seen again, and all the while the clock kept ticking on as if to chronicle the souls that Time had driven to the depths of Damnation!

A cold perspiration brought a strange numbness to my body, and I dragged myself out of bed and went to the window, where I drew aside the lace curtains and looked long into the quiet street. The striking of the town clock, slow and tremulous upon the night air, was as so many strokes upon my body. I winced as though I had been struck by a whip in the hand of a slave-master. A

cab rattled over the cobbled street, forcing my nerves to so great a degree of intensity that even the solace of tears was denied me.

I glanced timidly in my mirror, and saw a shrinking, white-robed figure with unkempt hair and a pair of saucer-like eyes of a non-descript color; eyes that under normal conditions are a cold gray with a suspicion of violet and green fringing the iris. I wrung my hands and repeated under my breath: "O God! what is Eternity —*E-t-e-rnity*—*E-T-E-R-NITY*?"

* * *

November 5th.—'Tis a boisterous, yet friendly wind that blows to-night; it does not shriek nor whistle, but blows a steady gale. I look around my apartments and think they appear unusually pleasing. Perhaps it is the witchery of pink-shaded candelabra, perhaps the effect of a newly-born flame of joy that burns in my soul. My statuary looks flesh-colored in the roseate glow, and my paintings are like bits of pulsating nature. My large tapestry, "She," that hangs above the grate, is a grand and glorious tableaux. Raphael, with his great, melancholy eyes, peers out of the depths of a shadowy corner; Beethoven smiles from his pedestal on the piano;

Shakespeare frowns from the top of the book-case, and a water-color sketch of Mme. Recamier is for the moment a living, breathing beauty. My books seem doubly precious and attractive. How I love them! I can go in the dark and put my hand on any book I may have in mind, I know their positions so well. Then, too, there is something in a strangely intuitive touch that tells me which is which. Cæsar, my bull-pup, is stretched before a grate of burning anthracite (that hisses like a nest of angry serpents), pretending to be asleep, but all the time casting furtive glances toward me as I sit hunched over my desk in reckless disregard of hygiene. My hair is tousled, and my pink dressing-gown is polka-dotted with ink and daubs of sealing-wax; yet I feel in perfect harmony with the eight walls I call my home. I have put my whole heart, my energy, my hopes, my ambition, and peculiarities into the furnishing of these rooms. Truly, they are "soul of my soul," and bespeak my personality more plainly than words.

* * *

November 7th.—This morning dawned gray and chill. I look out of my window and sigh.

The view is despicable. I see a clothes-line strung with every imaginable article of wearing apparel flapping in the damp wind, a garbage wagon standing in the mud, a rickety milk-cart drawn by a spavined horse, and a whistling butcher boy wearing red yarn mittens and his father's trousers. I cry aloud for the inward light that was mine but a twelfth hour ago. I have sore need of it.

* * *

November 8th.—This morning I rose while my household slept, and all the world was chill and gray, and trudged over hill and stubblefield, through rocky paths and briar patches to meet the sun. I walked buoyantly, tirelessly, because I knew a place where a flame of happiness burned for me. On and on I walked over cold, wet leaves and frost-kissed ground until I reached my accustomed haunt in the wood. Around me waved flaunting banners of red and gold. A strong wind brought me the voice of a hill stream and the grate of branch against branch. Squirrels frolicked at my feet, and through the crisp air came the tapping of a woodpecker. A cloud of amber lay upon the eastern hills: a cloud that grew fiery as it rose upward. The sun, glinting and vibrating, broke through

the silver stems of a cottonwood, and I saw—
my happiness!

* * *

December 2d.—It is very nearly dusk. I have just returned from a walk in the face of a bitter wind that stung my cheek, whisked my hair spitefully across my eyes, and whispered cowardly in my ear: “Turn back, turn back. My wrath is great.” A rebellious power within me retaliated: “No, no, NO!” and I doubled my efforts to retain my equilibrium and breathe less laboriously. Behold, I am the victor! I, a frail being, scarce stronger in comparison to the elements than the brown leaves that flutter helplessly in the air, whispering mournfully: “Dying, dying, dying!” But it proves that what one tries to do with heart and soul, one can do. Such a day! The wind is chanting a funeral-march in a dull monotone among the chimney-pots, and the poor little leaves keep crying out in feeble, quivering voices: “Dying, *d-y-ing!*” A gray, damp-smelling mantle hovers nearer and nearer the earth, like a great hawk stealing upon its prey; a cloud that gradually grows more gray until houses from whose windows countless lights gleam

fitfully, look like rows and rows of devils with a thousand blinking eyes.

Mon, Dieu! How odd this sounds! But then, I'm an unusual girl, and liable to say anything. I make it a rule to say just what I think regardless of whom the shock may kill. I say and do such odd things that people who are too stupid to understand me call me "queer." I call myself a contradiction to the world, but as for being queer—everybody is queer in a greater or less degree, only one cannot often see one's own peculiarities. If I am queer it is because "independence" is the predominating note in my character. I pay no more heed to Dame Rumor's hysterical spasms than if there were no such thing. I haven't a pennyweight's interest in what the world says of me. What is the use striving to touch a responsive chord in the hearts of the multitude?

To-morrow you are dead and forgotten, and your life's struggle goes down into the awful silence of the grave and in a little while—O, such a pitifully little while!—your name and memory are lost forever.

Surely the fault is not mine if the Creator gave me more original gifts and a more daring spirit than to His other children.

I have subjected myself to the most rigid self-examination, and if I am more queer than other women it is because:

1. I am possessed of a love for books and Nature far exceeding the companionship of men and women.

2. My faith in humanity has waned almost to the point of extinction.

3. My faculty for analyzing people has made me old in the hey-day of my youth.

4. A prize-fight is not more repulsive to me than a fashionable *soirée*.

5. When I hear people boasting of patrician blood, my instinct discovers a lineage that will not bear close scrutiny.

6. I prefer to be indebted to my purse, rather than to my fellow-beings for diversion.

7. I believe a good book is the most sincere and elevating friend one can have.

8. I never allow sugar-coated arrows to pierce my flesh; they strike only to rebound.

9. I do not gossip.

10. I do not wear conspicuous clothing.

11. I abhor women's clubs.

12. I dislike weddings.

Truly, this is a queer world. People are queer—animals are queer—vegetation is queer—and who knows but that the world toward which we are journeying is far more queer than this?

* * *

December 28th.—Some one is playing and singing "The Last Rose of Summer" in the salon below my room. It has brought tears to my eyes and a painful ache to my throat, for it is one of my dearly-beloved songs.

I am so nervous, the most commonplace word would irritate instead of consoling me. My dog puts his paws on my knees and looks into my face inquiringly. I say, angrily: "Down, *d-o-w-n*, sir; I'll have none of you!" His dogship slips away with downcast, wondering eyes, and I whisper to myself: "It was not I; oh! it was not I that spoke so harshly; it was the devil within me!"

A few minutes ago a group of bright, young girls called, and I had the maid go to the door and say I was not at home. Poor Winnette! She is the victim of all my petty whims.

* * *

An hour ago I heard a familiar step in the hall, and Winnette brought me a card.

"Shall I say you are not at home?" she inquired.

"No—*n-o*," said I, impatiently, "show him up."

"*T-to your s-study?*" stammered Winnette.

"Yes," I replied, in a voice that brooked no interference.

"I—I thought, perhaps, you had forgotten that you are in your boudoir gown," she continued, in an apologetic tone.

"No, I had not," said I, quietly, "I am fond of gray; it becomes me. Besides everything is going to be just as it was before *Monsieur* and I quarreled—just as it was before—before——"

She paled as if struck a blow in the face, while I gathered up the folds of my silk kimona and stared at my image in the glass, as I hurriedly twisted my hair into a loose coil on my neck.

In a moment a tall figure bowed before me. He spoke my name softly—O, *s-o* softly! Instantly my spirits soared above the littleness of morbidness and despair—the sun shone broadly into the darkened chamber of my soul,

and I was a woman—keenly, passionately alive. My heart cried out: “Eugene, *E-u-g-e-n-e* !” Just then something whispered: “How *d-a-r-e* you love this man? How dare you love a man who legally belongs to another?”

The light died out of my face as quickly as it had come. The old shadow crept over my heart, but only for a moment. The inward light came again, and I advanced to meet him with outstretched hands, saying: “*Bon jour*, Eugene.”

I closed the door, and, turning, looked him full in the face. Neither spoke.

I crossed to where he stood by the side of my desk. I sat down. And in the throbbing silence he stooped and pressed a kiss upon my hair.

* * *

January 6, 1901.—There are millions of women whose hearts are so warped by petty jealousy that it gives their faces a wizened, pinched-up look and their eyes an expression of secret unrest. Women, whose inner lives, if laid bare, would be a shocking revelation. Women who hate in secret and stab in the dark, and imagine it is hidden under the ragged cloak of pretended good breeding. I

sometimes think I must be strangely frank, perhaps absurdly so, for writing down these homely truths that everybody else seems afraid to mention save in whispered confidence but I am what I am—as Nature made me. I cannot affect a position in which the pulse of sincerity does not vibrate. Some people are pleased to call me queer. *Parbleau!* how it amuses me! I wonder if these same people ever stopped to think how more than queer they may appear in eyes other than their own. I am not sneering at this plague of jealousy that Providence has seen wise to inflict upon the world—far from it. It is a fact too deplorable to admit of sarcasm.

* * *

January 8th.—My home—the first *r-e-a-l* home I have ever known—is a pretentious cottage with a pretty garden, but a few miles from a thriving metropolis. I have learned to love this sweetly quiet spot, and I am as contented here as is possible for one of my nature until the nomad blood of my father gains the mastery in my veins, and then I flee from solitude as Lot from the doomed city of Sodom. I have only to step across the line to be in the glamor of play-

people and Bohemian revelry. When the mad river of blood subsides and its fire is spent under the calm current bequeathed me by my mother, I thrust the mock paradise behind and take up my habitual manner of living. I enter my silent rooms, where I have wept tears of joy, where I have cried in agony—where I have lived and dreamed, and I bow down before my dust-covered possessions with feverish homage. I throw open the windows to admit the light, and then I call my dog: “Cæsar, Cæsar, where are you?”

January 10th.—Of all born criminals, the liar stands pre-eminent. He is like a whited sepulcher: clean on the outside, but inwardly as black as night. He is more murderous than a stiletto in the hand of a hell-inspired Italian. He damns his victim, body and soul.

* * *

January 20th.—It seems to me the Bible should read: “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth is a woman’s tongue.”

I am not suffering from sudden insanity, nor am I in a strange or contrary mood. It is only: the more I think of the despicable relations existing between women, and especially the never-dying antipathy of one

woman for another, I find myself in such a state of exasperation and contempt for my sex that I feel like fleeing to some Eveless country, there to eke out my existence.

* * *

I have noticed that a beautiful woman, or one of unusual intellectual power or accomplishments, is despised and ostracised and trampled upon. Why? Purely and solely because the opposite sex admire her and seek her society. A woman worshiped among men, is the innocent target for all manner of ill-bred reports, all manner of injurious sarcasm, that eventually terminates in a ruinous scandal. The poor victim, however guiltless, is compelled to suffer as no possible defense can OBLITERATE it.

To be sure, there are Madonna-like women in the world, who live for naught but to do unto others as they would be done by, but they are so few and so precious that to meet one is an event never to be forgotten. How beyond understanding is the fact that when a man sinks to any depth of depravity he will be lifted up by a thousand feminine hands and voices; he will be welcomed in the homes of

gentlefolk and be free to choose a wife among them. Let a woman make one false step, and, socially speaking, she is eternally damned. The harder she struggles to rise, the louder will be the protestations from her sex. She will be mercilessly thrust back. Thus it is, one step in the darkness leads to that awful pit of obscurity that knows no resurrection.

If, by any trick of fortune, a very poor, or self-supporting, perhaps a gossip-maligned girl, marry a man of affluence, her girlhood will follow her into her new life, and, like an evil genius, appear at the most unexpected and inopportune times. Women may treat her half-way civil for her husband's sake, but their salutations will savor of icebergs and the north pole.

* * *

January 25th.—I have great faith in myself; so much, in fact, that I will not acknowledge there is anything beyond my ability. When I meet some one considered great, whose power is undeniable, I say to myself: "I am capable of being greater; I *w-i-l-l* be greater." This is not egotism; it is simply that I aim at no standard short of the highest. In the material world, necessity is

the mother of invention; in the ethical world, desire is the mother of realization. The wish to better one's life is the beginning of fruition. It is glorious to have such an incentive. Sometimes I seem so far, so very far from the goal, and again it is in the shadow of my grasp. I look, and look with my clear eyes until they grow larger, darker, wilder, trying to keep sight of the feverish flame that one day burns with alluring brilliancy and the next flickers, as though its vital breath was nearly spent. But I cannot give up; I *w-i-l-l* not. I must go on, and on, and on, and in the end, when I shall have reached Arcadia, death will beckon me.

* * *

January 26th.—Woman is a complex animal. She has the stillness of the violet, the love and passion of the red carnation, the fury of the tigress, the bravery of a gladiator, the tenderness of a saint; but overshadowing all these is the innate cunning of the devil.

January 27th.—I like the woman who smiles in the face of pain and shattered hopes, clasping the steel more near lest it bring a passing smart to others. I know this woman.

I could honor the woman who defends her sex from poisonous tongues and speaks no ill of friend or foe. I do not know this woman.

I like the man who scorns to speak evil of a woman; the man who will not lie to his fellows; the man who kisses his mother. I know many such.

* * *

January 29th.—When the frost lies like a shroud upon the vine, I think how like it is to life. Death ends our brief career of wretchedness and paltry joys, while friends soon forget that we have lived. Such is the penalty of—life.

January 30th.—There is something in the being of every refined person that makes him fear the verdict of the world and hide his faults as a murderer his crime, lest they take wing and reappear with tenfold bitterness. That something is—pride.

January 31st.—I do not know why women are so desirous of imitating men. The woman utterly free from masculine traits possesses the main requisite of a gentlewoman. Such a one is the only kind that is really lovable, and every right-minded person will agree with me. Men do not look for mimic pro-

ductions of themselves in the women they would marry. Every woman can be womanly if she will but follow the promptings of her better nature.

* * *

February 2d.—I know the world. Know it well, and I know its people. The passing throng in any fashionable hotel is a study. Sometimes I enter this throng just for the strength that comes of seeing it. I mingle with the pageant of bejeweled, moneyed people, whose heads are swelled with self-importance, quite overshadowing a none too active brain. I see groups of chattering women fondling squint-eyed, much-groomed, and blanketed canines, while somewhere in the dizzy whirl are pale little children with pathetically slender, half-naked legs, being led about by a saucy foreign maid, whose charge is an innocent excuse for her flirtations. Of course, this little by-play is only a speck in the great drama of this vain world, but without it the music would cease and the curtain be rung down never more to rise.

I know the people of the slums, the shop, and the factory. I know the ignorance of the virtuous lower class, the foibles of the

middle and only class, whose greatest crime is trying to imitate the yellow-dog-ism of moneyed aristocracy. And I know the weakness of human nature. I have found:

If you let a woman know you consider her weak, she will show you how strong she can be.

Let a man suspect you consider him weak, and he will at once demonstrate how much weaker he can be.

* * *

February 3d.—If I had the means to indulge in philanthropy I would endow a school where woman could be taught the art of carrying an umbrella and holding up her skirt. There is not one woman in ten who can do either of these things gracefully, and if they could only see themselves as others see them, they would endorse my project unanimously. I always strive to remain indoors rainy weather, simply because I fear to face the ever-alert umbrella in the hands of women who are so intent upon trying to decide how the sleeves of their new dinner-gown shall be fashioned, or in gazing askance at the shop windows, that they do not know whether

umbrellas are pointed skyward or up-down.

* * *

February 5th.—Poverty is an accursed thing, a hellish plague, a parasite that clings with an iron-like tenacity to the frayed and ragged edges of the world! a great, ravenous wolf that shows its sharp teeth in gluttonous huntings and flaunts its bruised and bleeding victims in the face of the world as a reminder of its power. I wince, and there is a strangely deep pain in my heart whenever I come in contact with one of the wolf's prey. For a moment I am (mentally speaking) as miserable as the wretch before me. It is not pity I feel; it is not contempt, but a wildly maddening anger that such a thing as poverty exists. The poor do not want pity; nobody wants it. I would rather have the world's curses than its pity. Pity? *Dieu!* It is a nauseous, damnable insult!

* * *

February 6th.—I am thinking of Lorraine today. Lorraine was my schoolmate. She was my countrywoman. It was she whose sweet cunning soothed Eugene in the pain of defeat and quarrel and married him before the sting of defeat had ceased to burn.

I know Eugene suffers. I know the whole of his heart.

I know my face fills every crevice of it, for he has told me so, and I—in spite of the world—in spite of the devil and in opposition to the prompting of my better nature, have—listened.

There is no look, no sign, nor word between Eugene D'Merci and me that might not pass between any man and woman who love one another, but there is an unspeakable bond, a something that means "Hell is not hell since thou art here."

Sometimes Eugene comes to me and his face is white, almost pleading. He comes to my little study, a room where no man's foot has trod save his, and he says: "Iris, I—I am worn out. Read me something—*d-o*."

Forthwith there is a battle royal in my soul, and the inevitable result is—the infant wail of conscience is hushed in the o'er-powering voice of love, and, like Gretchen in "Faust," I am ready to risk all—*l-o-s-e*—all

* * *

February 7th.—I am ill in spite of my avowal to the contrary. A physician came

this morning and prescribed a medicine of absinthe bitterness that will not improve my condition, because I have no faith in its properties. One must have faith in all things, the possible and impossible, to realize virtue. Faith is wonderfully magnetic and uplifting to those susceptible to its influence, and it is contagious too—a contagion for which I have longed and prayed until I am weary. Ah, me! I must be immune. There must be no place in my soul where the seed of faith can grow, since it is always near me, yet refuses to tarry.

* * *

February 10th.—I've been reading "Gioconda," a translation from the Italian, dramatized for Eleanor Duse. Poor Silvia! the mere mention of her name brings to my mind a tall, white lily, untainted by so much as a drop of dew. O, the loveliness—the divine purity of her soul! Her character is like a song in the trees that goes floating by us on the wings of night. I can no more explain my admiration of her than I can paint a masterpiece, or chisel a Madonna out of marble. Gioconda—what of her? She fills me with unspeakable bitterness. I hate her! It is as if she lived to-day, for her disciples are

scattered broadcast over the earth, following in her selfsame steps.

* * *

February 15th.—It is cold. The winds sob in the maples, occasionally bursting into a wail like that of a little child in distress: “Yoo-oo-o-o-yoo!” is the sound over and over again. Save for its dull monotone, it is so still. I can hear my respiration and the scratching of my pen. I sing a stanza from a comic opera to revive my dying spirits, but there is no melody in my voice. I try again and again, with only partial success. No matter the tune, it is spoiled by: “Yoo-o-o-o-yoo!”

* * *

February 18th.—I sit at my little window and look out over gray housetops and grayer chimneys—at mutilated fences, at shutters and gates that hang awry, and windows hung with soiled curtains, and at windows with curtains so stiff and prim that they seem in readiness for a funeral. Verily, the inmates under each roof can be judged by the dress of their abode.

* * *

February 20th.—I am at last face to face with all the petty selfishness and disillusioning insincerity in the world, and yet I have been trying to make myself believe it is not so. A king's ransom is too little to give in exchange for the brightness (even though it was deceptive) that was mine but a twelfth month ago. Time and experience have joined hands and thrust the fact full upon me. Such a realization must come into the life of every woman between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. It is an indescribably sad awakening. Isn't it awful to know the Judas friendships—that one cannot trust one's own brother in a business transaction—that hypocrisy stalks the street by day and by night seeking to destroy? That one's misdeeds are remembered and paraded even after death and resurrected, aye unto the fifth generation? One's charities are speedily forgotten and could not be found with a searchlight.

* * *

March 3d.—*O cieux!* I am tired; so very, very tired! There are days that I love a strenuous life; days that the spirit of passion enters my soul and the pulse of the world throbs in my veins. At such times my heart

cries out: "Faster, faster!" Is it any wonder I find myself a victim of nerves and tearfully emotional in the pink, pink rose of my youth? To confess to "nerves" at twenty is deplorable. Now, if I were thirty, to own that I have "nerves" would not be a startling disclosure, and yet the fault is not altogether mine. I was brought up in an atmosphere of noise and hurry and rush, and at times it is as necessary to my existence as the rain to a thirsty shrub. *Diantre!* the pace is not worth the price. A woman's youth, and beauty, and health, and—shattered faith in humanity is the sacrifice. Dear God! why is this so? When we dissect humanity, what is left? That which was once as luscious wine vanishes, leaving in its stead rank dregs as bitter and repulsive as wormwood. A confidence once forfeited can never be restored. The smothered pain will rise phantom-like and flap its devilish wings over the budding of renewed faith, and instantly it droops and dies like a rose kissed by the frost.

* * *

March 4th.—To-day I am lethargic; yes, in heart, body, and soul. As I look back over my young life, the hours that I really lived,

the hours when the pulse of joy throbbed in my veins, stand out so vividly that all the other hours and days that go to make up a year count for nothing. My life has been and is, a struggle against unfavorable environment. I am forced to smile when my heart heaves with a violence great enough to stifle me. My face is calm, while inwardly a slumbering passion is fighting for recognition. I must laugh when I long to cry. O, if I could only forget my disappointments, my struggles, my humiliations! I am not afraid of the past, even though it is haunted by the phantom of sorrow, but I am afraid—O, I am sore afraid of the future! The future with its mysterious secrets causes me to shudder involuntarily. Could I have a passing glimpse of what it holds in store for me I could cover my eyes in terror; I would cry out: “No-n-o, I do not wish to see! I have already suffered more than my miserable life is worth!”

* * *

March 5th.—Night draws on apace. What does it matter—since it is night, eternal night to my soul.

* * *

March 7th.—I have a temper. Yes! Who of riotous Huguenot blood has not? 'Tis not the slow-brewing, revengeful sort, neither is it vindictive or spiteful, but the impulsive kind that suddenly leaps to a hell-like fury and as suddenly subsides into a calm indifference, followed by a strange, almost overwhelming pity for the poor weakling that occasioned my wrath. There is more than ordinary charity in my soul.

* * *

March 15th.—A spring rain patters upon the roof, and through my open window comes the scent of moist earth and tender grass. Close by the garden gate a stone sun-dial throws a cold gleam against a clump of snow-ball bushes, whose straggling, out-stretched arms are dotted here and there with tufts of pale green.

I am reminiscent in spite of myself. Somewhere out of the vague past there comes to me the tremulous strains of a violin. It is as soft as a spring breeze caressing a bed of violets. I listen, fascinated, while a dreamy listlessness steals over me. Lo! I hear a sweet and glorious andante, a melody that sets my heart atune. Slowly, very slowly, it loses

its song in the wind, and is swept on and on—
 into the valleys—over the hills, and at last
 is lost.

* * *

March 16th.—If Adam ever possessed the
 weakness of envy, it must have slumbered in
 the rib that God removed to endow Eve, thus
 making man exempt, while the green-eyed
 worm has descended through the ghost of
 years a hateful legacy, a stigma upon all
 womankind.

* * *

March 17th.—I do not believe there ever
 existed a really sincere and unbroken friend-
 ship between women. If, by chance, there is
 a single exception, it has survived only be-
 cause its strength has never been put to the
 test. True, the number of supposedly staunch
 friendships are legion, but so surely as there
 is life and death, so surely as night follows
 day, just so long as women make confidants
 of one another, there will come a time when
 the sting sharper than a scorpion's will creep
 in and destroy the fancied affection. And the
 pain—oh! the awful, gnawing pain will never
 die, but will cling to the heart like a parasite,
 while the wound will ache and burn, with an

occasional passionate outburst so long as life shall last. Albeit, there may be treaties of peace over the gray ashes of a dead or diseased friendship, it is undeniably a fact that "true reconciliation can never grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep."

* * *

March 19th.—Yesterday I walked through the damp, brown grass of a graveyard to look upon the lowly bed of a girl I loved. A syringa bush by the side of the headstone is struggling to put forth its leaves, and a few shoots of pale, new grass peep from the cold, moist grave. I felt like up-rooting the hateful little tufts, crying out: "Why should such as this be living and breathing the air, while underneath lies the dear, dead body of Blanche Bardeau?" A spring wind blew softly and warm among the stones, and a robin came with inquisitive chirp and was away.

O, the awfulness of life's *finale!* the deep, black grave, the narrow casket, the hungry worms that creep and crawl and devour year after year, then crumble to nothingness with the dust of the dead. What does it matter who goes before! The rest will soon follow.

* * *

I wonder where the soul dwells while awaiting the resurrection? If a soul is judged so soon as life ceases, what need is there of a resurrection? Who knows where the dead are journeying? Who? Who?

* * *

April 1st.—Every woman is fond of hearing a man say to her: “I love but you.” Should he not tell her this on an average of once a week, she is clever enough to find a way of making him say it, even if she has to resort to childish coquetry, and ask: “How *m-u-c-h* do you love me?” For answer, the man presses the woman’s head against his strong breast, and the woman hears a strong heart-throb, and is no longer soul-hungry. The man is great because the woman’s dependence and faith make him so; and the woman is great because she feeds upon his strength, the very strength of which she is the foundation.

* * *

March 11th.—When I look upon a fine statue or a famous painting, my first thought is not of its possible money value, but the wish to see the living model. If man can

sculptor and paint such beauty, what indeed must be the grandeur of the Great Master?

* * *

March 14th.—All men are pleased with the sound of their own voices. They fall in love with the woman who listens attentively to the recital of their ambitions, their work, and hobbies. It is far more to be a good listener than a good prompter.

* * *

March 15th.—I hold my head erect, because I am face to face with a fighting world, and it must know I meet it bravely.

* * *

April 3d.—To-day I see and feel the years whose sands have fallen in the glass of Time. These shining grains have drawn a sword of fire through my heart, yet the knowledge they have given me more than atones for the relentless sting of pain. I sit here alone, and I go over my life—my childhood in France, my girlhood in America, my travels, my oft-interrupted education, my present home in Missouri, and my meeting with Eugene. I come to that memorable evening—the evening of our betrothal. Again I hear the storm and feel the fierce wind beating against my

cheek. I feel my damp, loosened hair whisked in my eyes, and I see him—a powerful figure of Viking mould—walking beside me, clasping my cold, little hand in his great, warm palm. I relive and re-suffer our misunderstanding and his union with Lorraine. I—I alone was at fault, and the thought is bitter with the bitterness of death. I feel again the thousand passions that sprung into life with the crying of my soul for its mate, a voice that sobbed and would not be comforted. I come to another day—that day of days, when Eugene stole unannounced into my study and seated himself in his accustomed chair. He looked older, sterner, paler. I was not surprised. I knew, I knew—my life and I—that he would come some day, some time. I looked searchingly into his eyes, saying, in a low tone: “Eugene, have you no fear of hell, no hope of paradise?”

His voice was hoarse as he said: “Spare me, Iris.” My brain is whirring and throbbing and out of the chaos comes but one thought and that is: “My soul and yours are united by a mysterious and divine tie. One half the brain can have no thought that is not shared by the other half. Just so, is your soul the completeness of mine, and mine, yours.”

I stood upright, motionless, with my fists clenched until the nails dug deep into the skin. Seeing—feeling—hearing—nothing!

Moved by a strange impulse, I glided behind his chair. I stooped over him and my two arms crept slowly, very slowly over his shoulders. I rubbed my cheek against his bearded one and my lips brushed his hair. Instantly, he put up his hands and held mine tightly. * * * We stood facing one another. At our feet, the crushed petals of the white rose I had worn on my breast mingled with the petals of the red, red rose he had worn in his lapel. I looked at the poor, bruised flowers and my eyes grew wide, and strange, and still, with the thought that came to me. I shivered. Eugene looked and a momentary pallor crossed his face. I felt myself lifted up—up, and I heard: “I pledge myself to stand between you and the world. I pledge you my life!”

* * *

April 4th.—What matter that I live from day to day playing a part that I may hide from curious eyes a deadly wound?

Are not my fellow-sufferers legion? I meet them in my travels, in street-cars. They are

everywhere! All with that something in the eyes that is unreadable even to the initiated and for every soul is its own refuge.

* * *

April 5th.—Some things that seem to me unexplainable:

Why a pretty woman will call a prettier one a hussy.

Why a plain woman has more than ordinary intelligence.

Why a man prefers beauty to brains.

Why a tall man seldom marries a tall woman.

How a little woman can manage a six-foot two-hundred-pound piece of masculinity with a mere twist of her eye.

Why women walk like quadrupeds.

Why well-bred people put their elbows on the table.

Why well-gowned women go gloveless.

* * *

April 6th.—Sometimes the thought comes over me that there is no such thing as a devil, according to Biblical portrayal, and this is followed by an almost convincing thought that the devil is of the feminine gender, and every person who knows the *r-e-a-l* meaning

of misery and despair is the victim of a devil now walking (or that *h-a-s* walked) the earth in the guise of woman. These women are pretty, plain, sinister, cultivated and illiterate, of high and low degree, but no matter the type, the person possessed loses sight of the human shape and sees naught but the serpent's eye, the cloven hoof, and vampire cruelty of living flesh and bone that will keep him in accursed purgatory so long as the evil one lives.

* * *

April 7th.—There is no type of humanity more disgusting than the holier-than-thou hypocrite who kisses her woman friends on every possible occasion and in secret, talks about their faults and failings.

* * *

April 9th.—I esteem men. I do, indeed. They are not emotional, impulsive, tragic, nor Janus-faced. They do not weep and moan over the death of a pet dog, nor allow a neighbor's sharp tongue to throw them into hysteria. They make less disturbance over a fortune lost in the wheat market than a woman creates over the fancied misfit of a gown. Man! What a great place he fills in the drama of life!

Were there no big, stalwart men to love the women, and no women worthy to be loved, this world would be as a desert; it would cease to revolve. There would be no world. It is the law of the universe for one woman to love one man and none other, and one man—one woman. In my eyes there is but one man in all this mundane sphere. I know I love him madly, passionately; that my homage bears a kinship to the lotus-eating days of the dim past; and yet I try to convince myself it is not so. Often and often I tell myself I hate Eugene, but when he comes and stands before me I know differently; I cannot hate him when he is with me. He is tall and athletic, kind and strong, O, *s-o* strong! When I am in his presence I fear nothing—neither the world, nor death, nor the hereafter.

* * *

April 10th.—To-night my thoughts go back to another night in the months ago when a tall, gaunt, hollow-eyed, hungry thing leaned over my bed and pressed his cold lips against my warm breast. I cried in trembling tones: "Who are you? and oh! what do you want? What *d-o* you want?"

For a moment there was no answer save an awful silence, a silence in which the breathing of this disciple of Satan could be heard distinctly, and then—and then—"My name is Sorrow," came in a sepulchral voice, "and I am come to say to you: It is not well for Joy to live alone. Henceforth your life will be shared with me."

* * *

April 15th.—I do not know much about love, save that all love is mental in its first stage. The love I know does not come suddenly, but in a series of shifting images. It finds lodging in the heart and remains there; a love that asks nothing, and gives all. There is another love; it is like the red, red rose. It fills the veins with a fierce sweetness for one fleeting hour, and then a nameless woe devours it all and rules the quivering soul ever after. But it is worth—yes, it is worth—the punishment.

* * *

May 9th.—I am unusual. Distinctly individual. My feet never tread the beaten track of conventionality; yet I have never gone out of my way to be other than ordinary. It is natural, and natural eccentricity has its

virtues; acquired, it is a sign of idiocy. As the bat is an alien among winged things, just so am I alone in the midst of my fellowmen. Because of this, I ask no one to sanction my ideas of men, women, and the world. I voice my thoughts simply because it is my right, and I have no intention of pressing my views upon others.

What is my body—your body—a thousand bodies? The universe of bodies is nothing in the balance of one soul. When a soul is crushed to death the body exists in abject misery. When a body is dead there is peace. Hence, the superiority of the soul.

Women rush and struggle and tear one another's souls asunder in the headlong rush for society's rewards. They sacrifice every human trait—honor, self-respect; aye, even grow degenerate in pursuit of the chimera, happiness. Society recognizes only bodies. Without a soul itself, what should it know of souls? How long will this last? Just so long as there are women to lead men hither and yon; so long as there is life, and love, and passion. Society makes moral cowards of men and fools of women. It should be called "The Brotherhood of Fools."

Poor, deluded devotees of a despicable creed, they have no shrine save the world, no God save the will-o'-the-wisp—"gold."

Finally, there comes a day of reckoning, when nothing remains but the cold, gray ashes of a wasted life, the dust of defeat that speaks volumes in its awful nothingness.

To be in the presence of a woman who has always held aloof from society; who has never drunk of its honeyed bitterness, is like basking in the warmth of a benediction; while she, who has been stung by the scorpion and thrust it aside before her sensibilities reached a state of callousness, is quite as praiseworthy.

My *o-w-n* soul—what of it?

The intricate workings proclaim the hand of an inimitable mechanic. As I hold it up before my mental vision I see a thing that was once of alabaster whiteness, now marred by numerous dark spots, signifying inborn traits that belong peculiarly to me, and could not be understood should I enumerate them. By the world, perhaps, they are classified as "faults," yet the closest scrutiny reveals no deceit, avarice, superstition, cowardice, malice, hatred, jealousy, or revenge. The whole

world may look in upon the secrets of my life and lay bare the innermost wish of my heart, and I have nothing to fear. I stare and stare at my soul without the quiver of an eyelash. I look closer, and discover several ragged, bleeding wounds where the wheels of the world have mangled it, and still I stare with no more emotion than the Sphinx.

I am listless and tired, without the shadow of a cause. I shall open my piano and play—"Damnation of Faust." In the bass notes is the diabolical laughter of the devil, and my lethargic pulse will quicken and leap and my blood will grow warm with life and passion.

* * *

May 11th.—The almighty dollar rules the world. Both men and women jeopardize their honor and send their souls to perdition in pursuit of it. The weak voice of conscience is lost in the headlong race, and so it goes on and on until, practically speaking, it is a case of "When Greek meets Greek."

Women cannot practice coquetry upon one another because—it takes a woman to understand a woman.

A common love or a common hatred is the bond between most women.

Women dress for their own sex as well as for men; for the former, to excite envy, and the latter, to win smiles, attention, and approval.

* * *

May 12th.—These things I possess:

A sweet voice, soft and distinct.

A plain face.

A pretty mouth.

A fine chin.

Green-gray eyes.

Sound teeth.

A healthy brain.

A graceful body.

* * *

May 13th.—Yesterday morning I came in from the garden, bearing in my arms a great mass of scarlet roses. On the way to my room I caught my reflection in the hall glass, and I actually hesitated and looked long and searchingly at the picture to be certain the tall, smiling, animated girl was really I. Strangely familiar were the eyes that spoke to me—eyes that I knew as a child before the years had hurried me on to a goal of thorns and wretch-

edness. How pretty the roses looked against the soft sapphire of my empire gown! How graceful was the unconscious pose! I lingered over this vision of myself with chaotic feelings. It was almost as if I looked upon an apparition of the dead, since my *r-e-a-l* self—the being I looked upon has been dead years! *Tout de bon!* I felt the change these thoughts occasioned, and fearful lest I witness the transformation I turned quickly from the glass and ran upstairs, tripping on my train in my haste to reach the privacy of my own room. Again I saw my face and it was pale. The eyes wore their habitual searching, far-away, hungry look, and my throat ached as I carelessly tossed the roses into a tall crystal vase.

* * *

May 14th.—A jay calls shrilly from the top bough of a cherry tree and the doves coo from the barn eaves. How dazzlingly white they look against the cool blue of the sky! A tall stalk of fleur-de-lis in a Venetian vase sits on my desk, and ever and anon I look at it just to feel the responsiveness in my soul. I am keenly alive to Nature's gifts, and I am glad. It proves that my spirit is not altogether without life—that down deep in my

being is a shaft of sunlight that needs only an uplifting influence to bring it to the surface. When inanimate things cease to thrill me, then indeed may I sorrow. From a worldly point of view, I shall be dead.

* * *

May 15th.—What staunch friends books are! It is true the real book-lover absorbs an infinite something from his books that is indefinable. I have found it in a marked degree in many of my studious acquaintances, and I myself possess it. A flower lover derives a softening influence from his flowers, but I cannot explain it; I know only that it exists. My books are my solace, my companions—my confessor! My taste in booklore seems to be foreign to that of the average reader. I am fond of Tolstoi, Ibsen, Balzac, D'Anuzzio, Ouida, La Fontaine, Shakespeare, Pope, and Hugo. The books of the day amuse me for an hour. They make no lasting impressions.

How more than great is the preface of "Les Miserables"! It reaches the main-spring of the heart, and every word finds its way into the soul by right of its human, aye, divine meaning.

May 18th.—It rains! A damp wind makes an open fire inviting. I feel like a caged lioness in spite of my luxurious surroundings because my imprisonment is not voluntary. I am kept indoors owing to a severe cold that threatens pneumonia. What wonder that I find myself gradually sinking under the influence of the “blue demon.” He draws me into his iron arms and kisses me into submission, whether I will or no. He is a faithful lover. These periods of depression are more maddening than excruciating pain, because they are torturing—slow. I struggle bravely to soar above natural apathy. I say: “*Le diable!*” but to no avail. I may push it aside for a time, but it comes unbidden again and again across my path. I see the furnishings of my room (a work into which I have put my hopes—my very soul) as through a glass that shines darkly. A plaster plaque of Dante gleams cold and gray against the turquoise of my wall. I stare at the strong profile in disgust. I look at my loved statues of Napoleon and of Venus with undisguised scorn, and my lips curl as I cast a sweeping glance at a full-length marble of a Greek swimmer. I see sensual-

ity in every line—every curve of the supple body! I see———.

My books and tapestries appear more than ordinary; even I—the only thing with a soul within these walls—look worn and tired. My lips are drawn and my eyes are a cold, dull green. I walk the floor in a nervous stride, the rustle of my train as it passes over the carpet adding fire to my irritation. I stop at the mantel and stare at the clock—then go to the window and look out over dripping maples—look over the hills into the infinite and beyond—yes—beyond!

* * *

June 11th, 1901.—Somewhere, out of the dear, sleeping past there comes to me a melody of my childhood; it is as soft and sweet as though whispered by the wind. My pulse leaps, fired by the grandest of all national airs—“*La Marseillaise*,” and the inspiring words: “*Allons, enfants de la patrie!*”

In fancy, I see the streets of Dieppe. Particularly a weather-beaten avenue, on which stands a tile-roofed cottage of quaint architecture, made conspicuous by the thatched roofs around it. I see the huts of the peasantry, and hear the sound of looms. I see

a little candy shop and a lace shop; the latter holds my heartstrings, for I called it, "At the Red Carnation," and made believe its customers were famous women of the French revolution. I see—yes, I see myself, a little saucer-eyed, lithe of limb, arrogant miss, being forcibly led along by a cross maid, who pinches my hand to hurry me homeward because I would loiter and see the street sights. I watch the swarm of noisy children following the bread-vender, and when he sings out, "*J'ai le bon pain,*" I mimic him in a low, nasal tone. Suddenly I run ahead and peer in the window "At the Sign of the Red Carnation." Mme. Pierre, the shopkeeper, is showing two Englishwomen a rich, cream-lace scarf, and I cry loudly: "O Jeanne! I think, I *t-h-i-n-k* I see Marie Antoinette and Mme. Dubarry buying laces." "*Ce n'est pas vrai.*" exclaims Jeanne, with heightening anger, and again I walk sullenly by her side, my hand clutched as in a vice.

I have said over and over again, "I am done, I am *d-o-n-e* with dreaming." But somehow my soul responds to the call of by-gone days, just as a wandering harp-string at the touch of the master.

* * *

June 13th.—To my mind there is no character in all the world of fiction more lovable than Henriette, of Balzac's "Lily of the Valley"—a lily in the true sense. I know she must have lived—not only in the author's brain, but in the living, breathing flesh. She does not live to-day. There is no woman such as Henriette and never will be. The thought of her brings into play all that is good within me.

* * *

June 22d.—There are people in such fear of worldly criticism that they dare not walk in an untrodden path; dare not eat, sleep, or talk save according to rule. They wait for some independent soul to provide a way, and then, sheep-like, they either follow or stand and look aghast. It is my nature to penetrate where none has been before me; my nature to do as I please; my nature to voice what I think. I am nothing if not original. I will follow no conventional example set by my fellowmen. I do not choose as associates people with whom I have no interchange of thoughts and ideas, and in consequence I am looked upon by divers women as an alien—an enigma—a subject for a scientist. "*J'ai envie de rire.*"

June 24th.—To-day I am like a high-strung horse before a race. Every drop of blood in my body is rushing through my veins at a feverish pace, and all because I am the recipient of an embroidered silk kimona direct from the city of Hong Kong, a present from a schoolmate, who has taken up a permanent residence there. I am wearing the gown now. It is gorgeous in blue and yellow chrysanthemums, outlined with gold thread on a cream ground, with here and there a queer-looking bird and scroll. The sash is of cloth-of-gold, threaded with pearl beads. I flit about the room and salaam before the pier glass. I have arranged my hair in Oriental fashion, yet I look excessively foreign to my dress. It serves to emphasize the fact that I am American-French, and unusually ugly at that. I look at my face and smile, because—well, because I have youth and courage, ambition and independence, and do not mind being an “ugly little thing.”

* * *

June 26th.—I know the sting of regret, but I do not know what it is to be conscious-stricken. Whether it is due to Providential oversight, or that I am guiltless of deliberate

wrong-doing, I know not. Conscience-suffering is in reality hell—a just punishment for a misdeed, no matter the nature. Those suffering may cry, as did Lady Macbeth: “Out damned spot,” but to no avail. So long as life shall last the sin will rise at the most inopportune times and stand like an avenging demon.

* * *

June 28th.—A rose bush by my window is nodding in the breeze, so heavily it is laden with scarlet bloom. I love the red rose passionately. It tells me a story of love, and chivalry, and romance. Then, too, I love the fleur-de-lis. It tells me of liberty, of peace, charity, and bravery—dear emblem of my fatherland. I have an inborn dislike, a horror in fact, of white flowers. They bring me dreams of tears, and sickness, and death. I love color, life, animation, passion! Chameleon-like, I feed upon my environments, and whatever they are so am I.

* * *

June 31st.—To-day I am like one who has taken a narcotic in despair and awakes to find the same old despair by his side. Life, at best, can be likened to a pebble tossed into

a brook—the stone ripples the brook's surface for an instant, then sinks to the bottom, never more to be seen again. Just so we come into the world—a little *éclat* at birth, a mere ripple in the big world, and then we go down to death, and the world knows not, nor cares that we have lived. I am not selfish, no, but I think every individual should strive to satisfy his ideas of happiness, no matter what nature those ideas may be, nor the cost thereof. If one does this, one has made of one's life that rare and lovely thing, an earthly heaven, and can afford to pass the opinions of others in disdain. In view of this, I have regard for the straight-lacedness and Paulistic ideas of some people, the culture and ignorance of others, for the meek and bold, the pure and brazen, and particularly for every religious sect in Christendom. Who and what are we if we cannot say what our lives shall or shall not be? In this age it is not a question of who one's father is or was, but what one is oneself.

* * *

July 16th.—The sun is sinking. Through its crimson glow a pair of robins fly toward a tangle of trees, seeking shelter for the coming

night. The glow of the sky serves to bring them out boldly, defining each curve of wing, each poise and circle. I look at the death of Day, and my thoughts are legion. I liken it unto a human life. The Day is life, the Sun is the pulse, and Night is death—the grave and the shroud as well. Is it not so?

I throw a filmy scarf over my head and walk slowly westward, with no objective point in view. The sky glows like a purple plum, and a cool breeze, a breath from the last, fervent kiss that Night gave to Day as he folded her against his dusky cheek, fans my face; and, more slowly still, I walk on and on, until suddenly I find myself in the dew-washed, tangled grass of a country churchyard. Softly whispering leaves and the piping of crickets join together in a vesper chant that seems a fitting requiem for the long-buried, long-neglected dead. The pale light of a young moon creeps shyly nearer and nearer the flat, old-fashioned headstones, touching them with the first shadow of a deepening glory. It is as if He is smiling through the dusk to protect His own. Gray's "Elegy" comes to my mind, and mentally I go over the lines slowly and

thoughtfully, unconsciously giving feeble voice to a particularly well-loved passage. The periwinkle runs riot at my feet, and I trace its origin to a sunken grave many yards away. Every fibre of my being takes on the stillness of my surroundings, my very soul undergoes a change, and I am lost in a dream of another world: a dream of - - - misery!

A bird flutters its wings from the dark recesses of a rose bush, and a bat circles over and around my head, as though startled at my intrusion into their sweet solitude. The wings of the bat brush my face repeatedly, yet I do not shrink.

I have a peculiar regard for this strange creature that neither bird nor beast will deign to claim as a relative. It is akin to me inasmuch as it loves the dusk and courts solitude, while I—love the hush of eventide and the indulgence of my own thoughts far more than the strife of day and the shallowness of my fellow-beings. I confess a most meager regard for my sex. *Dieu, quelle pitié!* Of course there are exceptions; it is the common herd of which I speak. The exceptions—affect me as though I had inhaled the potent breath of the **frail**, white iris that blooms in

the warm valleys of southern France. It is not really a question of "sex" that rouses my wrath. It is the miserable weakness that besets the daughters of Eve. I have made this subject an exhaustive study, and I am convinced the Creator did not endow woman with all the petty meanness she displays.

True, He may have given her "jealousy," "envy," "revenge," and she, inventive creature, has drawn upon this revenue, and come into possession of countless faults that would do credit to Mephistopheles. Oddly enough the blow falls upon her own sex—and again, oddly enough, the stroke is given in the dark, virtually behind the victim's back. What could be more like the sting of an asp? A man is exempt. Thrice heaven-kissed is he!

* * *

July 7th.—The air is close with the breath of petunias. Down in the garden the bees drone in the hollyhocks and ripening blackberries, and crickets chirrup from the cool recesses of a hop vine. At chance intervals a breeze ripples over the sultry stillness, bringing me the musk of mint and marjoram. My eyes ache, and a drowsy numbness deadens

my sense, as though I had drunk of hemlock.

* * *

July 8th.—There is something in the adoration of a little child that puts the thought of God in the mind of the skeptic. Compared to it, the friendship of men and women is a mere bagatelle; a truce for the allegiance of mature people!

Save in rare instances, each is ready to lean with the wind that blows toward self-gain. Truly, a formidable trait to offer posterity. I do not ask or care anything about the people I have met, nor do I care what they may think of me. If they like me, it is well; if not, it is of no consequence. I am totally indifferent to the world and its Judas-hysterical spasms. I live in a progressive age, and my time is so nearly taken up with my own affairs that I could not, if I would, heed the peace or war-cry of others. I'd rather be a painted, bedizened being of the market-place than a maker of mischief—a borrower of wormwood. The former wears her name on her sleeve that the whole world may see and avoid contamination, while the latter, like an asp, hides under cover of silence and strikes unexpectedly and unseen.

July 10th.—Last night I dreamed a dream that was not all a dream, since the morning has brought mysterious proof of what I have suffered. I thought I was alone in a green-wood listening to the voice of a hill-stream murmuring to its moss and pebbles, when into this Eden a serpent crept and buried its fangs in the blue veins of my inner wrist.

This morning—*n-o-w*—a faint discoloration marks the wound and the veins are sensitive to the touch. I have made no effort to explain it. I know not what to think. It may be that I am to have my hell on earth—if so, it is in expiation of sins of which I am ignorant. Sometimes I doubt there is such a thing as eternal purgatory, such a thing as immortality, but owing to education along strictly Biblical lines, I have not the effrontery to say I am convinced. Galileo says: "Doubt is the father of invention"; therefore, one must doubt in order to invent something; that appears conclusive.

* * *

July 12th.—A furious rain beats against my window. The world is mad, mad! My room is cheerless, its furnishings vague, and every drop of rain splashes against my soul—

my naked soul. It awakens every separate, sleeping evil in my body, which now and then finds vehement and inelegant voice. In such moments as these I wonder how I—a girl brought up in an atmosphere of culture—the daughter of a gentlewoman—became possessed of such singular thoughts and ideas.

* * *

July 13th.—The world is an ocean—the ocean of life, lashed by the storm of wickedness and soothed by the broad-spreading hand of conventionality, while people are but driftwood tossed hither and yon. I am a-tired—awearied of its merciless buffeting!

* * *

August 2d.—I have made Eugene promise never to come to me again unless I give him permission. A fortnight has passed since his step died away on the stair, and already I am soul-hungry for his voice and repentant for my exactness. But he shall not know—he shall not know! O, what mockery, what satire, what desolate absurdity!

Last night I sat alone in the stillness of my study, alone—alone, as I am always. I had watched the sun go down, down to nothingness, and with it my hopes of the day.

Each morning my hopes rise with the sun, and, unfulfilled, die with its setting. I know—my life and I—there is no peace! Last night—last night; shall I ever forget? I heard a step outside my door and a familiar knock. I knotted my two hands to keep down the gladsome cry that struggled to find voice; for the knocker was Eugene—the keeper of my soul—the master of my fate! seeking me—seeking me—and by no bidding of mine. Minutes passed. I gave no sign, for my brain was fighting for supremacy over my heart; a decidedly unequal battle, for love goeth whither it listeth. Finally, “Iris, I would talk with you a little while,” came in a voice infinitely tender. Still I made no sign, although my soul responded within itself like the murmuring of dark leaves through which a shaft of sunlight breaks. “Iris,” the voice began again; “it is two years—*t-w-o* years to-night since I told you of my love. Don’t you remember our walk in the wake of a storm—how the wind loosened your hair and blew it across my face and I kissed——.”

“Eugene!” I cried, as by no volition of my own, “you know not what you are saying.

What think you—what *t-h-i-n-k* you of your promise?”

“I retract my promise! By heaven, it shall not be a barrier between us! I am soul-starved and heart-starved for you—for you! You are so still and strange; still, like the wood anemone, and strange, like the gray of dawn. In the cluinsy machinery of my brusque being there is no fiber that does not vibrate with keen yearning for you—you little, white heart. You are a child compared to my great frame and strength. Iris, I remember——.”

“Eugene,” I whispered, “you have no right to stand there and recall and remember and re-suffer——.”

“You mistake,” he interrupted, in low, clear tones: “the right is mine by reason of my love for you. Open, I say! Open, in the king’s name!”

There was a silence lasting several minutes. I pressed my flushed face against the panel of the door and caught the whisper: “I am going now. I am sort of mad with the sound of your voice, and I’m saying things you have forbidden.”

Something stirred within my breast. It was my heart sobbing and quivering under the whip of passion; a heart like the sea, that moans, and cries, and aches, with hunger—ceaselessly—ceaselessly!

My scruples vanished like mist before the sun. I threw my door ajar, and standing unafraid on the threshold, cried: “*Eugene!*”

* * *

August 6th.—Refinement is an individual characteristic, part of the Ego manifesting itself under the most unexpected conditions of life. It is seldom found where it is supposed to exist.

A besmirched character is like iron-rust on damask; it can never be obliterated.

The woman who is constantly seeking and extolling healed scars in the lives of her sex has thrice-stinging scars hidden within her own uncharitable soul.

Let a woman make a confessor of a woman and the ears of the world will receive it on scheduled time.

Pour out your soul to a man, and seldom—very seldom is the trust considered other than sacred.

When I am dead I wish no ostentation,
no flowers, no music; a simple prayer is all.

* * *

August 10th.—Mine is a high-strung temperament, always tuned to the snapping point. To-day I am restless, abstracted, and nothing holds my attention. I look from my window at a rose bush, upon which a lone red rose dangles amid the dying leafage. My mood is such that I fancy the bush is my body, the thorns my life, and the blossom my soul!

My spirits rise a notch as I look beyond the straggling rose garden to a young horse-chestnut tree that each spring sends out its delicate white plumes like a veritable offshoot of Navarre. But my mood changes, and my spirits sink back—deeper—deeper as the memory of its planting comes to me. My thoughts follow one upon another like the pictures in a kaleidoscope, and—there is no limit—no limit! I look toward the street and see a man and a woman who have worshiped too freely at the shrine of Bacchus—a pair of fools! yes, fit jesters for that damnable court called the world; that vulturous audience ever ready to pounce upon the weak

and jeer, and scream, and laugh; a court whose Pluto blood leaps like a wild river and hungers and thirsts for lust—nothing but lust! And the taste of gore maddens it as does a red rag flashed in the eyes of a bull.

* * *

August 17th.—It is intensely hot! Not even the droning of a bee is heard—and the leaves lie motionless, stilled by a withering breath. I hate summer! 'Tis then the world moves with snake-like doggedness; yet I cannot make up my mind to seek green fields and pastures new, because nowhere can I find the sweet privileges of home. I love my home as passionately as Ouida's Alsace and Provence peasants loved Paris. I'd rather be a trifle lethargic here than buoyant in a cooler clime. My particular world is small—very small, consisting of a suite of rooms and bath. Here am I mistress and free from intrusion. Here I read, write, and play; here I look upon Apollo and Daphne and Paul and Virginia in their marble beauty. Here I wear gowns of flowing freedom, in which I stretch my limbs like a young tigress. At eventide I emerge from my voluntary prison and go forth to meet the breeze. I drink in the air that flows from

the hills—my spirits rise—my step grows elastic, and I give silent thanks for my priceless heritage—the art of being happiest when near to Nature. As a child of the wood, I am like unto a pebble in an oasis, yet the trees, the wind, and the brook all love me, and will miss me when I am no more.

* * *

August 18th.—I have just finished reading a most beautiful little verse; it is the story of three cream-white sister roses that drooped their heads over the rim of a tall vase that stood in a florist's window. They were sold singly to different customers. One found its fate against the breast of a happy débutanté, another gleamed waxen and cold in the raven head of a harlot, and the other was folded in the tiny hand of a dead tenement child. There is something indescribably divine in this simple tale.

How like it is to life! Just so does every family separate and drift into strange and unknown channels to live or die, as the case may be. This story has given me enjoyment, not for an hour or a day, but will live and thrive in my heart forever.

August 20th.—This hour I closed the door on a woman in peasant garb asking alms. I heard music in her voice; I saw suffering in the eyes that looked unflinchingly into mine; I saw beneath the worn cape a slender hand bleeding from unaccustomed hardships; I saw, in fact, a gentlewoman—that lovely type that grows more rare as the world increases its pace. She is like a frail white rose cast up by an unseen hand to droop and shiver among besmirched and jeweled creatures—to perish in this endless garden of lies.

There is something woven in the flesh of the well-born that no worldly storm can tarnish, no poverty conceal; it is as a smouldering light that bursts into glorious flame when the occasion demands, stamping its possessor with the most priceless of God's gifts.

* * *

September 13th.—Snatches of loved tunes from all the little operas I know flit through my brain. In fancy, I hear an aria from "Il Trovatore," a fragment from the "Bohemian Girl," bits from "Carmen" and "Martha." Why, why indeed should these memories come to ignite the smouldering sorrow in my heart? No person can know my innermost thoughts.

my face never betrays my mood. I have learned that a sorrow once told begets ridicule and that heralded joy invites criticism and gossip. Gossip! Ah, me, it is a hideous, crawling, blood-sucking vampire! Its broad, sensual head is ever reared and alert, while its great, protruding green eyes grow more livid as its victim succumbs to its grasp. It gloats over mutilation and long-drawn suffering. It is too merciless to kill. Its piercing, devil-like claws reach to the uttermost part of the earth, darkening it by a shadow no light can penetrate.

* * *

I am grown tired of writing. I mean to steal down-stairs to the piano and hum very softly a little tune that so persistently dogs my brain that I must give it utterance. It is the dear, old, quaintly-sweet melody: "I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls." I am crying. * * *O ciel!* How delicately sensitive, how more than strange, how beyond understanding is the heart! Who can know its mechanism?

* * *

September 14th.—Rain, rain, rain! The world is wrapped in a gray shroud, and pedes-

trians and vehicles look like phantom figures cavorting behind a gauze curtain. The trees with their long, skeleton arms outstretched appealingly, utter hollow groans and strangely human-like wails that die away like the last faint sob of a sorrowing woman; a cry such as Hagar, alone in the wilderness, must have sent up from the depths of her sorely-tried heart.

A day like this, coming after a period of sunshine and invigorating air, is like the sudden sorrow that creeps into a heart where joy has long reigned. I am possessed with the spirit of unrest. I have tried to read, to paint, and to sketch. I can do nothing—nothing but write! for my sensitive fingers are wild with the desire to trace the thoughts that arise in me.

I look about my little study and pretty boudoir adjoining, and I say: "I hate it! I hate my books, my paintings, and statuary; every article an insight into my real character. I hate my dog; I hate myself; and—yes, I hate Eugene! What right had he to steal into my heart and leave the image of his face there? How came he by likes and dislikes peculiarly my own?"

The slender golden chain I wear around my neck, underneath my waist lest it be seen by eyes other than mine, slips with my every movement, and the touch of it against my flesh is at present almost maddening. One moment it feels like the cold body of a serpent gradually strengthening its grasp on my life. I feel choked, and I am tempted to tear it from its fastening and fling it to the four winds of heaven. The next—ah! the mood has passed, and it is as a priceless amulet—my rosary—my rosary! I clasp it passionately. My eyes look backward across the ghost of years, and I unconsciously give voice to my thoughts: “It has been long—Oh! so very long since Eugene gave it me; long before I knew that kindred souls could quarrel; long, long before Lorraine Robespierre crept into my life, and, with Cleopatra sorcery, made him forget there was such a thing as honor, and that a reconciliation with me would be only a question of time. Lorraine *k-n-e-w*—she knew my heart in its white nakedness, knew its every pulsation, and, like the serpent of the Nile, gloated in her power, even though she stooped to the level of the dust to conquer. Had I but known—had I but *k-n-o-w-n*!”

If Lorraine should come to me as she used in the old days, I would talk with her of Eugene with quiet sincerity. But no, she avoids me. She knows she is the usurper of my kingdom—not I, the destroyer of hers.

* * *

September 15th.—Eugene came to me this morning, and as soon as the door had closed behind Winnette's retreating form he cried, brokenly: "Iris! Iris! there is a child—a child! A son is born to the house of D'Merci!"

* * *

September 18th.—Lorraine died last night. In the fury of the rain and the wind death came and carried her soul away, leaving her cold little body clasped tightly in Eugene's strong arms.

* * *

October 23d.—Eugene has not spoken of it—not yet. But I know that some day he and I will take the boy and cross the pond to Dieppe, that quaint French village beloved by artists and writers, where we will each live for the other, and try to mend our broken lives.

* * *

October 25th.—When I see a chemical-

blonde female I think of a piece of washed-out calico.

When I see a wanton, the subtle cunning of man flashes through my brain.

No woman, however degenerate, falls into the pit of ostracism unaided.

Opportunity is nothing unless fortified by ability.

Energy and intellect can accomplish anything.

* * *

October 28th.—I would rather a thousand times be in the clutches of a sea-monster or in the wake of a cyclone than at the mercy of a woman's petty jealousy. In the former there is a loop-hole for escape, while the latter admits no possible chance of getting away unscathed.

* * *

October 30th.—Eugene is ill—very ill. I have just left his bedside. The fever that is consuming him is burning its way into my heart with the knowledge that this is the end—the end. I know it. Already I see the dread *nale*.

* * *

November 24th.—This afternoon I walked over the hills toward the west, reveling in the

glory of a red, wintry sun falling asleep to the sweetly-crooning lullaby of the wind among the tall, naked maples. O, the mystery, the fascination, the purity of the breeze that hovers in the maple-tops! It carries a strangely-subtle perfume and a nameless something that sets one's heart pulsating with renewed vigor. I am imaginative—creative, dreamy! and as I stood looking at the rapidly-changing picture before me, it was very easy to fancy a slender stream—the sea and the sky, its sympathetic, protective sister. Gradually the water broadened and developed white-crested waves. The musical lash of living water came to my ear; sandpipers and gulls flew hither and yon; the odor of weed and salt and driftwood came to my sensitive nostrils; and, as the sea took on the myriad hues of her lofty sister, a blood-red cloud dropped down, and the hungry waves leaped up and closed over it. Where it sank—lo! Aphrodite rose to view in all the marvelous grandeur of her Venus beauty. Her copper-bronze hair glittered and streamed in the salt air, her arms played in and out among the waves, and she smiled—a smile no woman of earth could reproduce. My soul went forth to meet and mingle with

this strange fantasy—this offspring of my brain, while I—I stood shivering and alone, a dark little thing against a darker background of houses and trees and—wickedness!

It is only in moments like this that I soar beyond my inborn apathy, beyond the pain of knowing I am a frail child fallen by some trick of Fate in an alien place, where my soul bleeds and my beautiful nature is distorted and drawn because it cannot expand in a world whose women stun my sensitive being with their glaring imperfections; women with whom I have few thoughts and fewer traits in unison. O, the weariness—the unspeakable misery of it all!

* * *

November 25th.—I have conceived an insatiable desire for a statue of Sapho that I saw in a china shop a fortnight ago. Each day adds intensity to my longing and to my soul's rebellion against the power that denies it me. Why will not the shopkeeper make the price conform to my purse? Often I go to the shop and look long and lovingly at the beautiful bronze figure. O, the daintiness of her sandaled feet and tapering fingers, the perfection of her naked arms and throat! A

band of Roman gold, richly jeweled, holds the flowing hair away from a radiant face; her figure bends slightly, eagerly forward, and her right hand is raised to shade dark eyes in whose depths lurk witchery and passion; a pose expectant, life-like, inspiring!

I love the nude in art. I thank God for a sound, normal brain, a brain with no inward eye of lust and wantonness. I see naught but the divine beauty of Nature's handiwork. People who decry the nude do so from inherited prejudice or moral degeneracy. It is difficult to analyze my present mood; it is a thing mysterious and erratic. The peculiarities of my nature are so much a law unto themselves that my mind can exert no perceptible influence over the mood that enslaves me. Just now I know only that I am tired; *O, cieux!* so very, very tired.

* * *

November 26th.—The physician tells me Eugene is better, but I—I who love him, know that he is dying. This slight rally is only the last flickering of a flame that is nearly spent.

November 27th.—O, the suspense, the maddening suspense I suffer in having to stand idly by while Eugene's life trembles in the balance! I have all the fires of hell in my soul, and no glimmer of hope! The thoughts that crowd upon my mind make my heart beat wildly and my breath come fast. I am choking in the sting of my unspeakable helplessness. The mystery of death is greater than the mystery of life, and when we know the one, we shall know the other.

* * *

November 28th, 1900.—Eugene is dead! I have lost my only friend—my *a-l-l*, yet I give no outward sign of the desolation in my heart. My grief is too bitter for tears, besides there is no solace in tears for a sorrow like mine—no solace in giving it voice. One must endure in silence. O Death! thou thief and murderer! thou maker of orphans and widows! thou destroyer of hearts! thou vampire! thou crawling, flying, slimy, devilish thing! O, what—am—I saying? I—I am suffering! My brain throbs and roars like a thousand demons. My heart aches, my throat aches. I am not responsible—no.

Sometimes I believe there is an astral twilight in which our souls must wander after death.

The fire in the grate leaps up, and, behold! a gaunt, distorted figure, with piercing eyes, sits in the chair I left vacant when I opened my desk. I scan its features without a tremor, although I know instinctively my visitor is Death. The eyes of bottomless depths are fixed upon the clock that sits on the mantel above the flickering grate. There! It strikes *two*—that mysterious hour of the morning when a momentous change takes place in the pulse of every sleeping person; a battle of Life and Death, when the heart-beats are so faint that only a herculean effort on the part of Life establishes the normal regularity and wins the victory; otherwise Death wins, and night after night he strides forth in search of prey and blows his chill breath against the heart of saint and sinner alike.

“Why are you come?” I ask, advancing toward him without hesitation. “Cannot you see I am awake? that you will have no opportunity for another twenty-four hours?”

“I came,” he says, “because it is my custom. I expected to find you sleeping.”

At this he places his misshapen feet on the fender, and, settling back in his chair, becomes silent. I sit beside him, my hands folded idly in my lap. I catch a glimpse of my face in a mirror, and I am struck by its pallor, but it is nothing—only the shadows from my violet gown. It is a very unbecoming color.

My mind is chaos. Suddenly I ask, passionately: “What have you done with Eugene?”

“I have left him where I shall some day take *y-o-u*.”

“And that is?” I query.

No answer.

A maddening eagerness possesses me. My suspense is as the tortures of the damned, and I keep repeating: “And that is——?”

The answer comes slowly and emphatically: “Neither heaven—nor hell.”

There is a silence between us. The clock ticks, the fire crackles.

“You do not question further?”

“*No-o*,” I say, in a voice scarcely more than a whisper, “I am content.”

Rising, I take a prayerbook in the French from the mantel, a legacy from Eugene, on the fly-leaf of which is the signature of my

famous countryman, Victor Hugo. I read: "*Au delà du tombeau*——."

I glance toward my guest, and discover the chair empty. I am alone; aye, more than alone. Conscious of an inward feverishness that burns to my heart's core, I put the little book back in its place tenderly, lovingly, and sighing, sink into the chair lately occupied by my appalling visitor.

* * *

November 29th.—The sun shines and dances over the frost-kissed ground. I sit at my little window, and, for some unexplainable reason, I think of Tolstoi's "Resurrection."

How more than human it is! It is broad, and deep, and strong as life itself. It is a tempestuous sea—the sea of life lashed and whipped by the storm and slowly, mysteriously quieted by a master's hand. It tells the story of every human passion. It is life!

* * *

December 5th.—Last night the wind blew a terrific gale. Wild was the rain that swept the earth and beat in angry spasms against my shutter. But above the roar, and lash, and din I heard a knock upon the outer door—a hurried, eager summons, as if some poor, ex-

hausted wayfarer sought shelter and charity. I threw wide my door and peered into the porch shadows in feverish haste to know if I had a visitor, or was deceived by some freak of the storm. Suddenly a figure brushed past me and stepped under the soft, red light of the hall lamp, while simultaneously the door closed with a jar that sent a weird echo vibrating through the house. I raised my eyes and looked into the face of—a dead man. Damp and matted was the brown of his hair, and the once white flesh was purplish. His shroud hung in wet, sticky fragments, and the odor of decayed earth and boxwood brought a momentary faintness to my heart and sense.

There was no need to fear.

My friend in life could not be other in death; cannot be aught else even when ashes to ashes and dust to dust.

* * *

December 7th.—This morning the sun rose and smiled into my room in spite of drawn blinds and canopied bed. It found a tiny crevice and stole in, creeping shyly nearer and nearer until it rested like a warm kiss upon my hair and forehead.

It has changed the whole day for me; changed the current of my brain into a brighter channel. It was as if God spoke: "Thou shalt this day be glad."

I get a great deal out of the little things in life; yes, the smallest things make up the substance of my existence.

I try to find, and *do* find, inborn modesty in a beggar-maid, some semblance of goodness in a thief, the ghost of chastity in a harlot. I study every person that touches me in my daily life; in fact, I study humanity and find it interesting.

* * *

December 15th.—I have read somewhere: "Woman's inhumanity to woman has made countless thousands mourn."

This is a text for a minister. Its evils should be proclaimed from the pulpit with the same enthusiasm that marks the teachings of the God and the Christ. It is a pestilence—a plague as old as the world and far more deplorable than any plague of Biblical times. It is something a wife should pray that her child may not possess. A woman harboring sex-malice is accursed! She is the devil's own creation—a leper in the full sense.

The sun is sinking to rest, and a fierce breeze is souging through the poplars. I shall put on my hat and go out, that the wind may kiss my flushed cheek, that I may be soothed and rested and *l-o-v-e-d* by this blustering fellow, this flirt whose sweethearts are legion.

* * *

December 30th.—"Ships that pass in the night and speak one another in passing. * * Only a look and a voice and then darkness again and a silence."

To-day a longing steals over me to hear a voice that is stilled, to hear a footstep that has wont to set my pulses bounding. My worldly possessions—my life—would I give for this fleeting paradise. 'Tis passing strange the thoughts that come to me. I sometimes wish I had no finer instincts, that I were coarse in body, and soul, and mentality; then I would know naught of suffering; I would consider the passing of a life a mere episode; I would have no care for to-day or to-morrow. Truly, a blissful state, and yet, could such a transition take place at the wishing, I would not dare to voice these words; rather would

I cry out: "I am satisfied to be as I am."
 Ah, me! the perverseness of human nature!

* * *

December 31th.—I am so tired, so strangely tired—my life and I.

It is snowing, and the wind is singing a song of sorrow and rage. I sit alone before the firelight and watch the flames flitting over my gray gown; I feel them beating against the barred gates of my heart, yet there is no "Open sesame." They leap into my pallid face, but there is no flush of recognition. At last, as if weary from repeated failures, they sink into a state of coma and thence into a sparkless, livid red.

The old clock in the hall below stairs strikes the midnight hour. Outside the bells are ringing a requiem to the old, and a welcome to the new year.

I rouse myself from the half-doze into which I am unconsciously drifting, and, sighing, say: "A new year; I meet it fearlessly; it can bring no greater sorrow than I have known, and lesser grief will find no lodging for my heart is already an overcrowded hostelry."

My eyes fall upon a little miniature on the mantel—the face of a man whose eyes look smilingly into mine. “Eugene!” I cry, passionately, “you were my king—my *k-i-n-g!*”

The bells are dying out—the fire is growing ashen—I am cold, so cold.

From the next room a cry breaks in upon my consciousness—the wail of a baby. The child, little 'Gene—I had forgotten the child! The dark gates of my soul swing open under the force of maternal vitality. I stand transformed, every nerve thrilled with the first perfect realization of my great privilege—the bringing up of Eugene's boy. I hurry toward my boudoir, saying softly: “S-sh—! baby mine, mother is coming! mother is coming!”

L'envoi.

W 18



WERT
BOOKBINDING
Grantville Pa
Nov-Dec 1988
We're Quality Bound

